

# RESOURCES

News about nature, history and horticulture in Fairfax County

Volume 2, No. 2 Winter 2001



## Our Streams in Winter — *A Busy Place*

By Charles Smith, Assistant Manager, Ellanor C. Lawrence Park

Many of us think in terms of plants and their annual cycles. We know winter as a time of dormancy when plants shut down metabolic processes in order to survive the lessened sunlight and cold temperatures of the season. But while our plants are dormant, many of our streams are reaching the peak activity-level of their annual cycle.

In the eastern United States, our non-tidal streams derive almost all of their energy from plant material that falls and washes into them. Most of our tidal streams also rely heavily on this external (allochthonous) energy source. It is the very act of the trees going dormant and dropping those millions of tons of leaves that triggers the onset of high activity-levels in the streams.

This phenomenon was brought home to me last year while looking at Big Rocky Run, a medium-sized creek in western Fairfax County. Big Rocky suffers from having a lot of development in its watershed, so storms create excessive flow that flushes leaves and debris out and scours banks. But in fall 2000 there was very little rain, and Big Rocky Run's leaf pack remained in place. Within a two-week period in early November, Big Rocky Run's water

► **Streams** continued on page 8

## Keeping Warm in Early Virginia

By Jeanne Niccolls, Collections Manager

*The winter appears to have commenced early and wears the appearance of being long and severe.*  
(Cornelia Lee Hopkins, November 14, 1807)

Winter was a season to be reckoned with in 18th and 19th century Virginia. Numerous letter writers and diarists took note when it "froze in the house last night." Simple everyday tasks became increasingly difficult as winter settled in like trying to pour icy water or dipping a pen into frozen ink. To combat the cold, early Americans used a variety of methods to keep themselves and their homes warm.

Ironically, the 18th century homes of wealthy Fairfax County citizens featured high ceilings better suited to the heat of the Virginia summers than to cold weather. In homes like Green Spring, Walney and Sully, the only sources of heat were wood-burning fireplaces. Depending on the household, some 15 to 50 cords of wood a year were burned for heating, cooking and other uses.

Closing off most rooms and using only a part of the home was common practice in winter. Families often gathered in just one room around the fireplace or stove, their only source of heat.

*At this season, when the landscape no longer charms the eye...a cheerful fireside is our only resource"* (Cornelia Lee, December 29, 1801)

Furniture was rearranged around the hearth to take advantage of what little warmth it offered. A high-backed settle (a high-backed bench with arms), like the one at Dranesville Tavern, reduced drafts and could be drawn up to a fireplace. Fire screens helped block drafts, hold in heat or protect the body, face and clothing from excessive heat.

► **Keeping Warm** continued on page 8

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# Winter Wonders

## Winter Chills and Thrills at Huntley

Children ages five to ten are invited to spend their day off from school at Huntley Meadows Park on Monday, January 28, or Tuesday, January 29. Drop in any time between 10 am and 1 pm to learn how animals survive the winter. Games, crafts and self-guided activities will highlight programs on animal hibernation, migration and their ways to stay warm. Children must be accompanied by an adult. The cost is \$2 per child. Call Huntley Meadows at 703-768-2525 for information.



## Christmas Tours through Sully's History



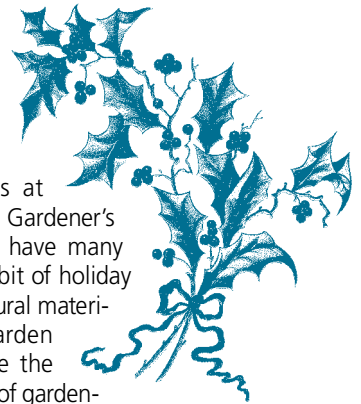
Candlelight tours highlight December 8 and 15 at Sully Historic Site. Real candles illuminate the house and grounds as you encounter characters from the past and hear of 18th and 19th century Christmas celebrations in Virginia. Federal-period interpreters in the main house discuss the latest news while holiday preparations take place in the outbuildings. A late Victorian family gathers around the Christmas tree for an 1880s celebration in Sully's East Wing. Civil War soldiers camped in the yard receive a box from home and have their Christmas in the field. Interpreters at the slave quarter show a different side of Christmas for enslaved African-Americans. Traditional seasonal music complements your candlelight experience. Refreshments are included. Reservations suggested for the two Saturday evening events, running from 4:30 to 7:30 pm. The cost is \$6 for adults, \$5 for seniors and \$4 for children.

## Cabin Fever

Let's face it folks, the football season is drawing to a close and cabin fever is setting in. So what do you do? Bring the family and head on over to Hidden Pond on Saturday, February 2, from 2 to 4 pm. See some of the most obscure natural subject matter to be presented by Pohick Porter, our groundhog personality, and Barby Ryan, weather person extraordinaire. This program features indoor activities plus outside adventures such as: Skunk Cabbage Safari, Whose Den is Whose? and a first-ever Winter Stream Study. Get your winter/early spring weather predictions at the same time. Reservations are required at 703-451-9588 and the cost is \$3 a person.

## Gardener's Holiday Reception and Exhibits

Celebrate the holidays at Green Spring! This year's Gardener's Holiday celebration will have many parts. It includes an exhibit of holiday decorations made of natural materials, created by local garden clubs. There will also be the opening of a new exhibit of garden-inspired crafts entitled "Floral Fantasies in Fiber." Also on special show is a garden railway display in our Children's Garden by the Washington, Virginia and Maryland Garden Railway Society. A free opening reception on December 1 from 6 to 8 pm will begin a month-long viewing of the exhibitions and displays through January 2.



## RESOURCES

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Production: Innovative Projects

**RESOURCES** is produced quarterly by the Fairfax County Park Authority. Inquiries, suggestions and comments should be addressed to Jane Scully, Editor, Resource Management Division, Suite 936, FCPA, 12055 Government Center Parkway, Fairfax, VA 22035-1118. To receive your free copy of **RESOURCES**, fill out the form on the back cover or register directly on our web site at [www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/resources.htm](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/resources.htm).

**RESOURCES** is printed on 100% recycled paper.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

At a time of loss and profound dislocation, parks can be a powerful antidote to fear and confusion. The reassurance of quiet spaces, natural environments and family activities like hiking, fishing and picnicking is always powerful in times of stress. The immutable coursing of a river, the ancient history of rocks and valleys, the perpetual renewal of plants and animals give a sense of stability and comfort that is much needed when uncertainty marks our days. Your parks and open spaces are there for you. We hope you will take advantage of all they have to offer to you and your family.

*Jane Scully*

## GLORY DAYS AT COLVIN RUN MILL

Our story on page 5 of this issue tells you about the proud heritage of the 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry during the Civil War. The highly committed reenactors of the 54th carry on the proud tradition of their namesake. Dressed in carefully authentic uniforms and equipped with reproduction rifles, today's 54th wage war on ignorance and apathy. Visiting schools, addressing groups and participating in reenactments to continue the tradition, the men of Company "B" help thousands of people explore and remember the unique contributions made by these valiant men. Visits by the 54th continue to be one of the most popular programs offered at Colvin Run Mill Historic Site. Please join us in welcoming back the 54th on Saturday, February 2, from noon to 4 pm.





## WITCH HAZEL – *Winter's Early Bloomer*

What is that shimmering with color in the winter garden of evergreens? That riotous brilliant yellow is the remarkable witch hazel tree, a fall and winter bloomer as welcome to the senses as spring itself. Not only does this deciduous tree put out a show of intriguing spider-shaped yellow flowers that bloom before the leaves come out, but it also has a pleasing spicy scent of allspice and honey.

The unexpected joys of the witch hazels come in part from their long blooming period in the heart of winter, “when their flowering would be cause for rejoicing even if they had no more scent than a scrap of cardboard,” according to garden writer Allen Lacy. As well, their wispy golden flowers carry with them “a sensuousness that seems unsuited to ascetic winter.”

Green Spring Gardens Park, the Park Authority's horticultural center, has several beautiful specimens of native, Asian, and hybrid witch hazels that are being developed as a national collection. This collection (under the auspices of the American Association of

Botanical Gardens and Arboreta) will add beauty to the gardens and provide other botanic gardens and horticultural professionals, as well as park visitors, with the opportunity to observe the unique flowers and other qualities of these plants.

This striking shrub with architecturally interesting lines is a wonderful addition to a naturalized garden. The genus as a whole is easy to grow and is suitable for varying soil and light conditions. The hardiest is the common witch hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*, but all the species will grow in our area. *Hamamelis* spp. will grow in full sun or partial shade in moist, well-drained soil. The shrubs have no serious disease or insect problems, although the native species are prone to leaf gall development.

The state of Virginia has a special connection with the witch hazel. An unsung hero of early American botany, the Reverend John Banister, made the discovery of the common witch hazel, *Hamamelis virginiana*. Banister was sent to the British colony of Virginia by Reverend Bishop Henry Compton in 1678. In dispatching Banister to Virginia, Compton, who was a keen plantsman himself, ensured that he would have a steady supply of American plants and seeds for his large, 14.5-hectare garden while also meeting his responsibility to provide the colonists with a minister.

Banister was an enthusiastic student of nature and sent hundreds of drawings and descriptions, as well as seeds, home to England. He soon proposed a natural history of Virginia that would catalog the region's flora and fauna. Banister also corresponded with, and sent drawings to, the famous British naturalists Leonard Plukenet and John Ray, giving them valuable insight into the region's flora.

Unfortunately, before he could begin his natural history of Virginia, Banister's career was cut short when he was accidentally shot



and fatally wounded while exploring along the Roanoke River in 1692. But this promising young naturalist left his mark through his descriptions and drawings that live on in the botanical works of Ray, Plukenet and Gronovius.

The witch hazel also has long been used for medicinal purposes. American Indians made leaf tea for colds and sore throats. Twig tea was rubbed on athletes' legs to keep muscles limber. Astringent bark tea was taken internally for lung ailments and externally for bruises and sore muscles. Today it is widely used in distilled extracts, washes for eye ailments and ointments for irritations and toning skin. For examples of recipes for witch hazel lotion and for herbal face cleanser, see our web site at [www.co.fairfax.va.us/resources](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/resources) and select “Gardening/wildflowers.”

So when you are scanning the catalogs this winter, looking for the perfect plant to add to the garden, think of witch hazels and all their history. The open, statuesque shrubs perform beautifully in Northern Virginia. After all, they have their roots here. ❄️



# “Stories from Floris...”

## Creating Your Own Fun

By Jane Scully, *ResOURces* Editor



The stories of families in the rural community of Floris remind us of the simpler pleasures of childhood and the happy memories they can create, even in busy, hardworking times. Along with Frying Pan Farm and its many outbuildings and livestock, these stories keep alive a way of life that has been so important in the area's history.

“Being part of a large family meant there was always someone to play with, someone going somewhere, or some activity going on,” remembered James W. Cockerill in the recent book, *Stories from Floris*. Between family and friends, the hard work was just part of a life that carried many pleasures.

Sarah Jane Middleton Burton recalled that “when there was heavy snow in the winter we enjoyed trips by horse-drawn sled to the Herndon train station [to deliver the milk for sale]. The horses were decorated with sleigh bells and it was great but cold fun!”

Nancy Lee Harrison spoke of sleigh rides where, “with bells ringing we gathered close in the hay, covered ourselves with blankets, and sang as we went through the snowy fields on a cold, moonlight evening.”

At sleigh-riding and ice-skating parties, “we always had big bonfires, sometimes with marshmallows, and hot dogs which came in long casings,” remembered Mary Winifred Nickell Brown.

Holidays brought family feasts, Christmas pageants at both the Floris Presbyterian Church and the Floris Methodist Church, and special Christmas presents like new clothes for dolls and books. “We felt cheated if there were not new ones from Santa and kinfolk,” Emma Ellmore remembered. “These were treasured, reread, and loaned to friends.”

In the summer, Mary Winifred Nickell Brown remembered, “we would go into the icehouse, located between the house and the barn, and cool our feet on the ice.” The ice had been cut from the pond during the winter and packed in sawdust. Children often slept on porches in summer to escape the heat.

Esther Harrison Ireland talked about the ice cream festivals held at the Ellmore farm. “In the morning the workers would meet at the dairy house to make ice cream. We took turns at hand cranking the ice cream

freezers. After supper the ice cream would be served. All the Floris people would gather at this special time.”

Swimming in Horse Pen Run swimming hole was a fine treat in summer, and seining for fish was a careful art. There are memories of ponies and pony carts, and oyster dinners in the fall. “Every fall when the apples were ripe, our father would take us ... to pick apples. [We would] play while some cider was pressed, and ride home with bushels of apples and a big barrel of cider,” Jane Beard Vishneski remembered. These apples would become the applesauce that was canned for the winter.

Surely the high point of summer, however, was the Floris Fair. There, the finest farm animals were displayed, as well as “scrubbed and shiny” fruits and vegetables, which were judged by class. Children participated in three-legged and sack races. A memorable aspect was the greased pig race. Whoever caught the pig could take it home as their reward!



These *Stories of Floris* not only are charming in their own right, an entertaining work of oral history. They also bring back memories for every reader of stories they have heard about earlier family times. *Stories from Floris* is available for sale at the Country Store at Frying Pan Park for \$8, with proceeds benefiting the park's education programs. Copies can be ordered by mail from Frying Pan Park at 703-437-9101. They make wonderful Christmas presents, hostess gifts and welcome gifts for a new neighbor. And they support the mission of the park. Come see for yourself! ❄️

*“...when there was heavy snow in the winter we enjoyed trips by horse-drawn sled. The horses were decorated with sleigh bells and it was great but cold fun!”*

# The 54th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry: Still Making History

By Michael Henry, Manager, Colvin Run Mill Historic Site

“Who would be free must themselves strike the blow,” argued Fredrick Douglass in 1861. “The arm of the slaves [is] the best defense against the arm of the slaveholder.” Douglass’s call to arms was to be answered by the men of the Union Army’s 54th Massachusetts Volunteer infantry. This first regiment composed of free African-Americans, the 54th would demonstrate a heroism and valor that remains remarkable even today. And on February 4 their committed reenactors will be at Colvin Run Mill to continue their mission of freedom and equality (see page 2).

Under the leadership of the 24-year-old Col. Robert G. Shaw, son of well-to-do white abolitionists from Boston, the officers and men of the 54th were a bold experiment in the creation of black troop regiments. Recruited in Massachusetts, it had members from virtually every state in the Union. Breaking myths and destroying stereotypes in the process of fighting for their country, the men of the 54th proved to all the value of black troops in combat. However, in the sand dunes of South Carolina, the men of the 54th would pay dearly for their glory.

There were few targets more tempting to Union leaders than Charleston, South Carolina, considered the cradle of the Confederacy. Charleston’s capture could provide both a tremendous moral boost for the Union while dealing a crippling blow to the rebels. But Charleston was protected by a series of large batteries or forts lining the waterway that had to be captured if the town was ever to be taken. One of the largest of these works was Fort Wagner on the northern end of Morris Island. An earlier assault on the fort had failed.

Late in the afternoon on July 18, 1863, the officers and men of the 54th arrived on Morris Island. After meeting with Brig. Gen. G.C. Strong, Col. Shaw fired up his troops by vowing to carry the company colors to the ramparts himself. Among the many troops assembled there, the 54th was given the honor of leading the assault on Fort Wagner.

As dusk fell the order to begin the attack was given. Leading his column into battle, Col. Shaw and his men advanced through withering fire toward Fort Wagner’s ramparts. Reaching a ditch at the base of the fort, the

men regrouped and braced for the final push. Leading the attack up and into the fort, Col. Shaw gained the crest of the parapet before being slain by the Confederate defenders. The 54th captured and held a portion of the fort for over an hour before being forced to withdraw.

As the order to withdraw was given, the color bearer of the 54th was shot and a struggle for the flag ensued. Sgt. William Carney rescued the colors that had been ripped from the staff. Wrapping the flag around him, Carney began to fight his way back to the Union lines. Despite being shot in the right arm, right leg, chest and head, Carney successfully escorted the flag back. For his heroic actions, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, the first of 23 African-Americans to receive this nation’s highest honor during the Civil War.

Close to 50 percent of the 600 men who began the attack were killed, wounded or captured during the struggle for Fort Wagner. The 54th had paid a terrible price for their glory. But their steadfast courage and heroism helped to pave the way for other African-American units. By the end of the war, over 200,000 African-Americans had enlisted in the Union Army and Navy. ❄️

*“The arm of the slaves [is] the best defense against the arm of the slaveholder.”*

– FREDERICK DOUGLASS





# Santa Claus is Coming to Town!



*By Ann Korzeniewski,  
Assistant Site  
Administrator,  
Colvin Run Mill  
Historic Site*

By Saturday, December 15, the evening shadows will lengthen and there will be a nip in the air. The old buildings at Colvin Run Mill Historic Site will be decked with greenery and lanterns will light the path leading to the big brick mill. Thus the scene will be set for Santa Claus's annual visit, when he will be the star attraction at this year's Country Christmas program from 4 to 7 pm. And while the chance to visit Santa IS a must for children during the holiday season, there will be much more family fun that evening, too.

The young and young-at-heart are invited to step back in time for a few hours to enjoy the unhurried atmosphere of the 19th century. A Victorian Christmas tree will grace the first floor of the mill with old-fashioned toys hidden in its branches and displayed beneath. Santa himself will be waiting by the fire in the miller's office to hear children's wish lists, and in the basement over another hearth visitors will be toasting marshmallows.

In the barn, another unique tree covered with Scherenschnitte — intricate and beautiful hand-cut paper ornaments — will be the backdrop for a group sing-along. Music from the old upright piano and rhythm instruments will accompany the caroling. Popular storyteller Mason Talespinner will entertain visitors of all ages, children will enjoy holiday craft activities and more voices will be raised outdoors as the costumed Virginia 49th Civil War reenactors sing around a bonfire.

As always throughout the year, but most especially during the holiday season, the c. 1900 General Store shelves will be brimming with distinctive merchandise and perfect gift-giving ideas. So much to see and do! Come join in the festivities. ❄️

## SULLY HOLIDAY CONCERTS KEEP YOU HUMMING

*By Barb Ziman,  
Sully Special Events Coordinator*

The shopping, wrapping and cooking are done! Family and friends are in town. What to do? Come to Sully Historic Site and enjoy an eclectic array of traditional music in an historical setting. Our afternoon holiday concerts have become a local tradition with many visitors, who come back year after year.

On Thursday, December 27, IONA returns to Sully. This popular Celtic group has performed each year for two sell-out crowds. IONA combines powerful vocals, compelling flute and whistle and unique harp. They bring you the music of Ireland, Scotland, Wales, Cornwall and France, blending songs, dance tunes and aires into a rich and stunning tapestry. Bagpipes and Scottish dancing add to the excitement of this unique group.

Friday, December 28, finds Sully hosting Ship's Company (see photo). This jolly band of 19th century sailors has been seen and heard up and down the East Coast. They bring hearty worksongs

of the sea to Sully. Sea chanteys have long been used to direct the sailors' work on ships, with one chanteyman singing a verse and others joining in on the chorus. Even though you won't be hoisting sails or weighing anchor, you'll want to be part of in the singing and revelry.



There are two performances for each show, one at 2 pm and the second at 3 pm. Tickets are \$6 and reservations are required for each performance. Limited seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis. A tour of the

1794 house complements your afternoon out and refreshments will be served in the original 18th century kitchen.

IONA has recorded several CDs that will be for sale at both their performances. Ship's Company will have finished their very first CD, *Donkey Riding*, and it should be available for sale as well. You can take home a bit of history that will have you humming into the new year. Call the site for reservations or more information at 703-437-1794. ❄️

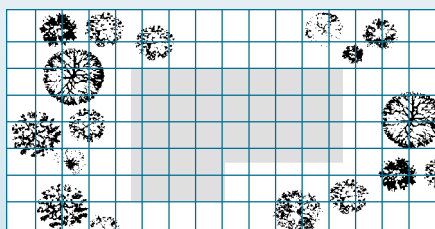
## PLANNING YOUR GARDEN NOW!

*By Cindy Brown, Interpretative Horticulturist, Green Spring Gardens Park*

**G**et up, go outside, cross the street and take a good look at your home and yard. Maybe you are pleased with what you see, or perhaps you are embarrassed to put your name on the mailbox. Your landscaping should be welcoming, complementary and proportional to your house and should reveal some of your personality. Perhaps your landscape needs a bit of tweaking or a total overhaul. Whether you attempt to do the work yourself or hire a landscape designer, it is helpful to understand the design process and determine your wants and needs.

Winter is the perfect season to dream and prepare plans for future gardens. It is the time to flip through magazines and make lists — the first step necessary in

the design process. It also helps to talk to professionals and learn from their mistakes and experience. This winter Green Spring Gardens offers a four-part Landscape Design series that helps homeowners and other non-professional gardeners design a beautiful and functional landscape.



The series covers the basic principles of design, shows how to prepare a site evaluation and site analysis, discusses appropriate hardscape materials and helps

with decisions on making proper plant selections. The series will conclude with a session presented by Thornton W. Burnet, Jr., landscape designer from Concepts & Contours. Thornton will use before-and-after pictures to illustrate the glories and pitfalls of landscape design.

Learning the simple steps of the design process will help you feel more confident, more organized and more able to achieve the designed look we all covet.

The Landscape Design Series for Homeowners: Planning and Planting Your Home Landscape will meet on January 12, 19, 26 and February 2, from 10 am to noon. The cost is \$10 per session (\$40 for the series). Please call 703-642-5173 for more information or to register. ❄️



## “Spring” Lambs

*By Yvonne Johnson, Assistant Historian, Frying Pan Park*

**F**rosty ground crunches under foot and clouds of breath hang in the air as the first weak rays of daylight illuminate the way to the barn. There softly lowing cows await their morning milking.

Pulling up your coat's zipper, you hurry into the barn to awaken the cows and check on the first new “spring” lambs.

Spring birthing can come early, even in January or February. Birthing brings many long nights working in the cold barn waiting for or helping with deliveries. Timing is very important in planning for animal births. It is best if the farmer can finish up the animal deliveries so they do not coincide with the planting season, which gets started in May.

For the farmer it is all part of running a productive and profitable business. Way back in August planning began for selecting potential sires. What strengths could his line bring to the flock? Will his genes improve the wool quality? Will the offspring be top quality for marketing?

At Frying Pan Park, we have sheep, goats and cows, and their babies are one of our main attractions. Some animals are purchased and come with a name. But for the lambs, kids and calves born here, the staff and visitors get to select the names. Since the farm staff works so hard to take care of the animals day after day and has to spend all night waiting for deliveries, they have the final say on animal names. But they are always open to ideas and suggestions.

Visitors look forward to meeting the babies during spring visits and school field trips. As the holidays approach, keep in mind that “spring” birthings are not far behind. Come visit the farm to check on the latest arrivals or call the park at 703-437-9101 for updates. ❄️

### Birthing Schedule:

*Puff, a Holstein cow, is due in December.*

*Thelma Lou and Aunt Bea, two sows, are due in January and February, respectively.*

*Sheep in the flock will begin delivering in January and finish up in March.*

*The goats should deliver in February.*



## ► **Keeping Warm** *continued from page 1*

Writing and reading, telling stories, singing and needlework occupied families spending cold winter days before the hearth, helped by hot drinks or a glass of “spirits.” Children did lessons or played games. Outside, work and wool clothing helped keep people warm.



*Child's bed with warming pan (and nightshirt.)*

Heated bricks and pieces of soapstone wrapped in cloth or small tin foot-stoves filled with coals were portable warmers. They helped warm icy feet at home, in the carriage and through Sunday service at Frying Pan Meeting House and other churches, which were generally without heat until later in the 19th century.

Unheated bedchambers were also common in the 18th century. To take the chill off, a servant would run a warming pan filled with coals over the sheets just before bed. By the 19th century, most people crawled into bed armed with a heated brick to provide warmth. A piece of soapstone wrapped in a blanket or a tin or ceramic bottle filled with hot water were other weapons against the cold.

Two or more people usually shared a bed, sleeping beneath a pile of quilts and blankets. For those who could afford them, featherbeds brought warmth, and bed hangings further helped prevent drafts.

Inventors' improvements in the design of fireplaces and cast-iron stoves that extended into the room and radiated heat from all sides made the large open fireplace that was so characteristic of 18th century homes obsolete by the early years of the next century. By stretching the stovepipe across a room or through unheated upstairs bedrooms

like those at Frying Pan farmhouse, cast-iron stoves heated larger spaces and did so more evenly.

These new developments were incorporated in new 19th century buildings like Dranesville Tavern, Colvin Run Mill, Huntley, and the Clark and Kidwell farmhouses. Whether fueled by wood or coal, cast-iron stoves proved a more economical, efficient and reliable source of evenly distributed heat than the fireplace. Although wood and coal furnaces became a standard feature in modern homes, cast-iron stoves continued to heat parlors across America into the 20th century. ❄️



*Bed hangings in Sully's master bedroom.*

## ► **Streams** *continued from page 1*

went from clear to a rich brown-black color, indicating that the tannic acid from leaves and other woody debris was not being flushed out regularly.

That color is not the result merely of tannins leaching from the leaves. It tells us that the shredders are at work. Aided by fungi that colonize the leaves and help break them down, the shredders are a group of mostly insect larvae that specialize in eating leaves and other organic debris. While the leaves form the basis of the stream food web, the fungi and shredders are the organisms that make that energy available by breaking them down. Shredders include many varieties of mayflies, stoneflies, caddisflies and true flies. They can be called primary consumers.

Secondary consumers rely on what the shredders break down as well as fleshy plant parts and rotting animal pieces. In this group you may find crayfish, amphipods (shrimp-like creatures), isopods, worms (including leaches), true flies, beetles, caddisflies, fresh water mussels and clams and fish. A cadre of scraping organisms includes snails, limpets, flatworms and fish. Finally come the predators like stoneflies, beetles, dragon- and damselflies, hellgrammites, crayfish, fish and birds. Salamanders, frogs, snakes and turtles can all play an important role in streams as predators, but they are generally dormant in winter.

Stream temperature has an impact on the metabolic rate of animals and helps determine the amount of oxygen that is present. Cold water holds more oxygen. Oxygen can be a big problem for stream organisms. The maximum amount of oxygen usually found in a cold, clean stream is about 12 parts per million. If the oxygen in a stream falls below 4 parts per million, animals die.

Generally, if a stream does not have a lot of urbanized area or a significant pollution source in its watershed, it will support a wide variety and abundance of animals, regardless of its size or type of bottom. Because of the limited ability of parking lots, roads and lawns to absorb rainwater, their presence often causes excessive water flow directly into streams during storms. With it comes pollution from roads and nutrients.

Non-point source pollution from livestock or heavily fertilized fields or lawns or point source pollution such as drainage from mines or other industrial uses can also greatly degrade water quality. These factors are largely dependent on human activity. So water quality is mostly determined by what humans do on the land around the stream.

The timing of the leaf fall with the cooling of the waters sets up perfect conditions for the high activity-levels in our streams during late fall and winter. As you ponder the winter landscape and plan next year's garden projects, remember that our streams are far from dormant. The person who wanders down to the creek and flips over a rock or grabs a handful of wet leaves will be rewarded with a glimpse of a community at the peak of its annual cycle. ❄️



## WINTER BIRDS AT RIVERBEND PARK

By Marty Smith, Assistant Manager, Riverbend Park

Riverbend Park is a migratory birder's delight the year round. While many forested parks throughout the region lose their colorful migrants in the fall, Riverbend has an "out with the old, in with the new" sort of history, swapping our bright summer songbirds in the fall for the incoming winter waterfowl and other birds of all varieties.

In fact, birding in the winter at Riverbend can be extremely rewarding. Typical sightings on the river include American coots with their white bills; elegant buffleheads; tight flocks of American widgeons; and ring-necked ducks, gadwalls, redheads and canvasbacks. There are even fairly regular appearances by more unusual birds such as tundra swans.

The river here is slow-moving and wide, with great numbers of fish and submerged aquatic vegetation. Consequently, the diversity and number of waterfowl that congregate to feed here in winter can be impressive. Many winters have turned up such overwintering birds as snow geese and common goldeneyes, both uncommon to the area. Two winters ago, a black scoter



was observed, delighting many birders who recognized its rarity.

Bald eagles are year-round residents at Riverbend. In winter, however, they are much easier to spot when the bare trees make it easier to observe them soaring over the water as they hunt on the wing or sitting majestically on a branch above the river.

While the riverbanks are a wonderful venue for bird watchers, they are not the only place to enjoy excellent winter birding within the park. Winter wrens are common here, skulking about in the thickets and

along the steep stream banks. The meadow can be home in winter to many kinds of sparrows, including swamp, song, field, chipping, white-throated, and fox sparrows. Rarer species turn up as well, such as the savanna and white-crowned sparrows.

And to top off an already excellent day of birding, the really fortunate birder might even pull a seven-woodpecker day, with sightings of pileated, the northern flicker, the downy, hairy, red-bellied, red-headed woodpeckers and the yellow-bellied sapsucker.

They're all here in the woods and waters of Riverbend.

To find other winter birds and birding spots, visit our website at [www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/resources](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/resources) and check with "Nature Finder" to find out what's where this winter. You can check by bird, species type, site, season and/or or abundance. This way, you may make discoveries of your own. ❄️



### PICTURE Your Parks



Photographs of the light, the birds, the flowers, the seasons of our favorite parks highlight a lovely calendar, new this year, for everyone who cherishes the natural beauty and quiet solitude that these special places bring.

The *2002 Calendar of Fairfax County Parks* celebrates the milestone acquisition of the Park Authority's 20,000th acre and the natural treasures of land and wildlife that are preserved today and for the generations to come.

The full-color calendar is \$10, half of which goes to the Fairfax County Park Foundation, a not-for-profit foundation dedicated to enhancing the parks and protecting the county's natural, cultural, recreational and historic resources.

The *2002 Calendar of Fairfax County Parks* is available at all Park Authority RECenters, golf courses, nature centers and historic sites. Calendars may also be ordered through the Park Authority at **703/324-8680** or via the Internet by downloading and e-mailing a printable form. The web address is <http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/openspace.htm>. Mailing costs are additional.

*These calendars make beautiful holiday gifts and support the Park Foundation's mission.*

## Slave Quarter Programs at Sully

By Carol McDonnell, Manager, Sully Historic Site

From February through April, Sully Historic Site will feature an exhibit, "The Enslaved Community of Sully." A special case exhibit will feature artifacts from the archaeological excavation of the old south road where indications of three slave structures were found. Artifacts such as pipe stems, 18th century bottle glass, a coin from 1806, iron pot legs and many shards from broken porcelain will help connect visitors to the unique history of this original site. The house exhibit will focus on the domestic house work that slaves performed. Beds will be in process of being changed; the dining room will be awry with a meal just ending; heavy cleaning will be going on in the chambers above stairs. Find out more about the hard work of John, Juba, Patty, Ludwell and the Old Mistress as they worked and lived in the winter months with the Lee family. ❄️

## Provide *POWER* to Our Parks!

How about giving back a little to the parks you enjoy so much? Your talents, energy and time can provide power for our parks as well as offering an enjoyable and enriching volunteer experience for you. We have a myriad of volunteer opportunities available, including:

**Program Leader:** Share your love of nature with children! Guide school groups on trail walks and lead them in activities that explore the natural world. Program Leaders are needed weekday mornings at nature centers throughout the county.

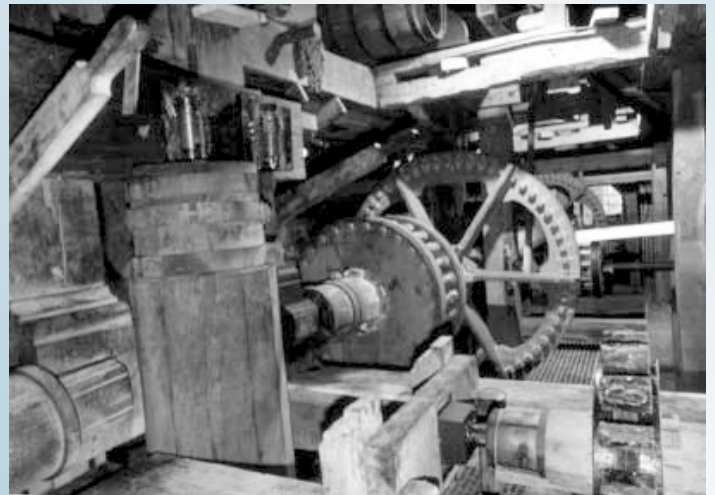
**Teaching Docent:** Breathe life into local history! Help children discover the past as you lead them in activities and tour historical sites. Teaching Docents are needed weekday mornings at Colvin Run Mill and Sully Historic Site.

No experience is necessary, just an interest in nature or history and the ability to work well with children. Training is provided. For more information about this and other volunteer opportunities, call Erin Chernisky at 703-324-8750 or visit our web site at [www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/volunteer.htm](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks/volunteer.htm) and click on the section that says "Discover Your Heritage." Enjoy being part of a dynamic and rewarding volunteer program. ❄️

## SPOOM MEETING IN MALBAIE, CANADA

By Marge Lundegard, Volunteer

This year's meeting of the Society for the Preservation of Old Mills, or SPOOM, was held in September in Malabie, Canada, with over 100 members from Canada and the United States in attendance. We visited five mills in all, including the following.



The Moulin Francois-Xavier Simard is one of the last carding mills in the province of Quebec. Besides carding wool, M. Simard does some woodworking similar to that one can see in the Appalachian Mountains. The mill, built in 1845 by Moise Tremblay from Saint Urbain, is a post-and-beam structure. Today, electricity is used to power the mill. M. Simard demonstrated the working of the wool cleaning machine and the wool carding machine. Simard is quite old but is determined to preserve his mill for posterity.

Our next stop was at Les Moulins Desgagnes on the Riviere Rouge. Seldom is a water-powered grist mill and a wind-powered grist mill found side by side, but here they were. When the water level was low, the windmill would be used to grind the grain. The water-powered mill was built in 1824 and the stone tower windmill was built in 1830. In 1850, Elie Bouchard bought the mill. Elie died in a tragic mill accident at the age of 26. Etienne, the youngest brother, managed the mill until he died in 1930. His widow ran the mill for three years. In 1962, the mill was classified as a historic monument. The windmill is still operational and produces wheat flour and buckwheat flour. We were told that "frogs" were added to certain parts of the mill as a lubricant!

Next year the SPOOM meeting will be held in South Carolina at the Gold Creek Mill at Easley, on August 22nd through 24th. ❄️

# THE JOYS OF MILLING AROUND

By Ann Korzeniewski and Nick Yannarell of Colvin Run Mill Historic Site

*When people go inside, they see that this beautiful building is really a big handcrafted machine.*

Why are people attracted to old mills? What is the appeal of buildings that have passed their heyday? Who cares about and for these relics of times gone by?

Some people just enjoy the old buildings in their settings. Water-powered mills were of necessity located near the creeks or rivers that supplied the power to run the machinery. Like Colvin Run Mill, many surviving mills stand on picturesque parkland in protected stream valleys. Their locations offer a soothing reprieve from the hectic pace of modern life.

There's also the simple beauty of the construction of these old mills. Huge wooden beams were hewn and worked by skilled hands whose artistry is still evident. When people go inside, they see that this beautiful building is really a big handcrafted machine. The elegant complexity of wooden cogs and gears turning and transferring power in a logical progression is somehow reassuring.

The few examples we see today represent the myriad mills built on streams that criss-crossed the county in the 1700s and 1800s. Industrial sites spread out wherever they flowed. Among the water-power sources were the Accotink, Popes Head and Pohick creeks; Cameron, Big Rocky, Pimmit, Difficult and Bull runs; and the Occoquan and Potomac rivers. The types of industries were as varied as their power sources.

Location was, as today, everything. George Washington bought land along Difficult Run, intending to build a mill. As many as 70 other 18th and 19th century entrepreneurs did indeed locate their mills there. The 1813 tax records include entries for 28 enterprises.

Two types of gristmills operated in the county: small mills called custom mills, where millers ground flour and cornmeal to a customer's specified order and large merchant mills like Colvin Run Mill where millers bought grain from farmers and sold flour and meal to a far-reaching market.

Saw mills were often located next to gristmills, creating big industrial complexes alongside plentiful water. Other local mills used water power for fulling, a process in which loosely woven woolen cloth was treated to clean it and felt it together to form a denser fabric. There were also bone mills, where animal bones were ground into meal to make fertilizer and plaster. And there were distilleries, where corn cracked open at a gristmill was made into corn whiskey.

No wonder, then, that the fascination with the beauty, the mechanical complexity and the variety of old mills has drawn together a group dedicated to the appreciation of old mills. The Society for the Preservation of Old Mills, or SPOOM, is made up of people of all ages who are interested in diverse aspects of mills. Some SPOOMers are photographers who love the beauty of the settings, the interplay between scenery, light, machinery and water. Others love the history of the whys and wherefores of who built the mills, what they produced and what happened to them over time. Still others are real-life millers who continue the age-old process of producing flour and cornmeal.

Every year SPOOMers from the United States and Canada travel to attend their annual conference. The conferences are held in areas where historic mills survive, and are planned and hosted by local society members. These yearly get-togethers provide an opportunity for mill enthusiasts to meet and exchange information in a program that includes lectures, a photography contest, social events, and the most fun of all — touring LOTS of old mills and related sites. It's always an interesting trip.

The 2001 conference was held in the province of Quebec and was attended by Mary and Jim Allen (Mary is Colvin Run Mill's volunteer coordinator) and volunteers Marjorie and Bob Lundegard. See box on page 10 for a report on some of their adventures. ❄️



Colvin Run Mill



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## YOUR PARKS

*Here are some of the parks  
 where winter is wonderful!*

**Burke Lake Park**  
 7315 Ox Road, Fairfax Station  
 Call 703-323-6600

**Colvin Run Mill**  
 10017 Colvin Run Road  
 Great Falls  
 Call 703-759-2771

**Ellanor C. Lawrence Park**  
 5040 Walney Road, Chantilly  
 Call 703-631-0013

**Frying Pan Park**  
 2709 West Ox Road, Herndon  
 Call 703-437-9101

**Green Spring Gardens Park**  
 4603 Green Spring Rd., Alexandria  
 Call 703-642-5173

**Hidden Oaks Nature Center**  
 7701 Royce Street, Annandale  
 Call 703-941-1065

**Hidden Pond Nature Center**  
 8511 Greeley Blvd., Springfield  
 Call 703-451-9588

**Huntley Meadows Park**  
 3701 Lockheed Blvd., Alexandria  
 Call 703-768-2525

**Lake Accotink Park**  
 7500 Accotink Park Rd., Springfield  
 Call 703-569-3464

**Lake Fairfax Park**  
 1400 Lake Fairfax Drive, Reston  
 Call 703-471-5414

**Riverbend Park**  
 8700 Potomac Hills Street  
 Great Falls  
 Call 703-759-9018

**Sully Historic Site**  
 Sully Road, Chantilly  
 Call 703-437-1794

*Need directions? More information?*

Visit us online at: [www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks](http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/parks)

## Winter Highlights

### ❄️ Preparing for Spring at Sully

The skills and craftsmanship of the enslaved community at Sully Historic Site will be on show as the blacksmith strikes the hot iron and, along with the carpenter, crafts wood into "hot beds" to protect the new seedlings for spring gardens. Bring your work gloves to help stir the compost and haul the dirt to create these 18th century hot beds. Plant a seed to bring home to your garden. The program is on Saturday, February 23, from 1 to 4 pm. Call the site at 703-437-1794 for more information. (Canceled if inclement weather.)

### ❄️ Don't Forget Children's Holiday Shopping!

The Frying Pan Park Country Store has its special shopping time for children on Saturday, December 8, from 11 am to 5 pm, and Monday, December 10, from 2 to 5 pm. The store stocks unique items in all price ranges with many items under \$10. Volunteers help children find the perfect gift for everyone on their lists. Free wrapping assures surprises for family and friends! Call 703-435-3710 for more information.

### ❄️ Bald Eagles at Mason Neck

On Saturday, January 12, from 9 am until noon, come admire the majestic bald eagles in one of their favorite haunts. Meet at Pohick Bay Regional Park marina and caravan to Mason Neck State Park (pay fee at gate). Binoculars and spotting scopes are recommended. Dress for the weather! The program is free, but reservations are required by January 9. The snow date is January 19. Canceled if hazardous conditions. Call Hidden Oaks Nature Center at 703-941-1065.

### ❄️ Evergreen Hike

Take a winter walk in one of our beautiful stream valleys. Join a guided adult hike at Scotts Run Nature Preserve on Saturday, February 16, from 9 to 11 am to search for woodland evergreens including mountain laurel, hemlock, ferns, wintergreen, ground pine and partridgeberry. Reservations are required and can be made by calling 703-759-9018. Canceled if rain.



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